REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration in view of the amendment and following remarks. In order to expedite prosecution the applicant has incorporated the feature of concentration from claim 12 into claim 1. The applicant believes that the amendment clearly places the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed below.

Claims 1, 2 and 8-23 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Sansone et al. WO 98/14505 ("WO '505"). As mentioned earlier, the WO'505 reference discloses/teaches to form a porous polymer film by the so-called phase inversion process. In this process a polymer dope/solution is precipitated in a so-called coagulation bath. This process forms a porous film having pores filled with the liquid from the coagulation bath. Subsequently, WO'505 teaches to remove said coagulation both liquid by placing the porous film in another bath to fill the pores with another liquid, e.g. an acid such as H_3PO_4 having a concentration of maximum of about 75 % by weight ((about 5 to about 75% by weight of a strong acid) see page 8, lines 17-20 of WO '505). The applicant's claimed invention requires a strong acid having a concentration of not less than 80% by weight. In fact, claim 22 requires a strong acid having a minimum concentration of not less than 90% by weight. In fact, claim 23 requires a strong acid having a minimum concentration of not less than 95% by weight.

Another pathway taught by WO'505 is to precipitate the polymer dope directly in a bath consisting of a non-solvent and an acid. The applicant has informed the undersigned that the usage of an acid alone (e.g. H_3PO_4) would result in dissolving the polymer again. The method by WO'505 uses a porous film starting material, optionally replaces the liquids from the precipitation bath to entrapping the acid. So the result is a membrane wherein the pores of the

membrane consist of entrapped acid. The instant invention is directed to a process for impregnating a basic polymer with an acid to obtain at least six acid molecules per repeating unit of the basic polymer. The result of the impregnation is not to entrap the acid, it is merely to form an acid-base interaction between the polymer and the acid. This linkage results in the acid remaining in the complex with the polymer whereas entrapped acid would leak immediately. The membrane accordingly to WO'505 would simply lose its acid during operation as polymer electrolyte. To obtain the complex, the acid has to strong and concentrated. Therefore, WO '505 does not anticipate the applicant's claimed invention. For the above reasons, this rejection should be withdrawn.

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response. However, if a fee is due, please charge our Deposit Account No. 03-2775, under Order No. 08577-00033-US from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Respectfully submitted,

By _____

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